

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NARAYANAN RE-ELECTED AT MTUC DELEGATES CONFERENCE

REF: 76 KUALA LUMPUR A-132, 9/17

1. SUMMARY. AT BIENNIAL MTUC DELEGATES CONFERENCE DR. P.P. NARAYANAN AND T. NARENDRAN WERE RE-ELECTED AS PRESIDENT AND DEPUTY PRESIDENT, RESPECTIVELY. CONFERENCE WAS CHARACTERIZED BY AN UNUSUAL DEGREE OF OPPOSITION TO P.P. AND OTHER TRADITIONAL LEADERS. END SUMMARY.

2. BERNAMA AND NEWSPAPERS HAVE REPORTED THAT THE THREE-DAY BIENNIAL DELEGATES CONFERENCE OF THE MALAYSIAN TRADES UNION CONGRESS (MTUC), THE PRINCIPAL FEDERATION OF UNIONS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, ENDED DEC 6 WITH THE RE-ELECTION OF DR. P.P. NARAYANAN AS PRESIDENT. P.P., AS HE IS KNOWN, WON BY A VOTE OF 148 TO 96 AGAINST A CHALLENGE BY A.V. KATHIAH, PRESIDENT OF THE ALL-MALAYA ESTATES UNION (MEMBERSHIP 3,000). KATHIAH CHARGED P.P., WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE ICFTU AND IS CURRENTLY ITS PRESIDENT, WITH BEING ABSENT TOO OFTEN FROM THE COUNTRY AND WITH FAILING TO PROVIDE STRONG LEADERSHIP. A THIRD CANDIDATE, ZAMRI GHANI, GOT ONLY THIRTEEN VOTES.

3. ACCORDING TO THE KUALA LUMPUR "BUSINESS TIMES" (BT) OF DEC 7 KATHIAH'S SUPPORT CAME MAINLY FROM DISSIDENT UNIONS BUT P.P. WAS BACKED BY THE NATIONAL UNION OF PLANTATION

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WORKERS (NUPW, 81,000 MEMBERS), OF WHICH HE IS SECRETARY

GENERAL, AND BY THE CONGRESS OF UNIONS OF EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC AND CIVIL SERVICES (CUEPACS--OVER 130,000 MEMBERS), OF WHICH DEPUTY MTUC PRESIDENT T. NARENDRAN IS HEAD. THE NUPW AND CUEPACS BETWEEN THEM REPORTEDLY CONTROLLED HALF THE DELEGATE STRENGTH.

4. IN ADDITION TO NARENDRAN'S RE-ELECTION AS DEPUTY PRESIDENT, FORMER RAILWAYMEN'S UNION (RUM) PRESIDENT YAHAYA ALI WAS CONFIRMED AS SECRETARY GENERAL (VICE S.H. ZAIDE WHO RETIRED AUGUST 23, 1976) AND TRANSPORT WORKERS (TMU) PRESIDENT V. DAVID WAS ELECTED DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL. TWENTY CANDIDATES CONTESTED SIX VICE PRESIDENCIES. THE WINNERS WERE: LIM THENG KAU, PRESIDENT OF THE DUNLOP WORKERS UNION (KPPDM); GURNAM SINGH, DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION (NUTP); A.H. PONNIAH, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AMALGAMATED UNION OF EMPLOYEES IN GOVT CLERICAL AND ALLIED SERVICES (AUEGCAS); ASHAARI MOHAMED, NOT YET IDENTIFIED; AND MOHAMMED ABAS, PRESIDENT OF RUM. LIM, PONNIAH AND ASHAARI ARE NEW VP'S.

5. BT'S V.K. CHIN COMMENTED IN HIS REPORT THAT THE TRADITIONAL MTUC LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO RETHINK ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MEMBERSHIP AND THE "CLIQUE POLITICS" OF THE PAST WILL HAVE TO GO OR THEY WILL RISK BEING SWEEPED OUT OF OFFICE IN THE 1978 ELECTIONS. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, CUEPACS PRESIDENT NARENDRAN HAS AGREED TO PUBLICLY DEBATE AUEGCAS REGARDING THE LATTER'S DEMAND FOR SALARY PARITY BETWEEN TEMPORARY CLERKS AND SO-CALLED CLERICAL OFFICERS. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, AUEGCAS IS SO INCENSED AT NARENDRAN AND CUEPACS FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE CLAIM THAT IT HAS SUSPENDED ITS AFFILIATION.

6. COMMENT: AS NOTED IN PREVIOUS REPORTING, THE MTUC LEADERSHIP IS VERY IN-BRED AND IS DOMINATED BY MALAYSIANS OF INDIAN EXTRACTION. FURTHERMORE, IT HAS TO TOE A VERY NARROW LINE IN ORDER TO CO-EXIST CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THUS ITS TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP IS OPEN TO CHARGES THAT IT IS IGNORING THE WELFARE OF THE WORKERS BY SEEKING TO AVOID MASSIVE INDUSTRIAL ACTION AND AGREEING TO LENGTHY AND NOT ALWAYS PRODUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS OVER PAY.

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ON THE OTHER HAND, FAILURE OF THIS LEADERSHIP TO DEFER TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PLEAS FOR WAGE STABILITY TO ENCOURAGE FOREIGN INVESTMENT WOULD RESULT ONLY IN HARSHER RESTRICTIONS ON UNION ACTIVITIES.

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